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*Full Length Research Paper*

***Guddifachaa: An Indigenous Childcare Practice of Oromoo Society***

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**Abstract**

*The study aimed at describing guddifachaa from perspectives of triad parties and ways to revitalize in Tuulamaa Oromoo. The study used descriptive qualitative method. Out of non-probability sampling, purposive and snowball were used. Data collection methods were in-depth interview, key informant, non-participant observation and secondary data sources. The study found that guddifachaa is an ingenious, indigenous and endogenous childcare which has been practiced in a ritual way since time immemorial. Guddifachaa is a customary adoption in which adoptive families adopt a child from biological families based on their interest and consensus to bring up an adoptee as per Safuu and cultural norms, values, rituals, and obligations. Guddifachaa is viewed positively because it enables childless families to have their own children to give social protection and social security in turn. To revitalize guddifachaa, Gadaa system should be revived because it is all about cultural, social and political issues as far as it is the symbol umbrella of Oromoo identity. The study recommends that since customary adoption is a base for formal adoption, governmental and non-governmental organizations should support and give recognition for guddifachaa.*

**Key Terms:** Guddifachaa, Indigenous Childcare, Oromoo Society, Revitalization,

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### **Axareeraa**

*Kaayyoon gooroo qorannoo kanaa Oromoo Tuulamaa keessatti ilaalcha qaamoleen sadan guddifachaa qabaniifi malleen deebisanii dandammachiisuu irratti xiyyeeffata. Qorannoon kun akkamta'aa addeessaatti (descriptive qualitative) dhimma bahameera. Walitti qabiinsa raga qorannoo kanaaf mit-carraa iddaatoo keessaa mala iddaatteessuu kaayyeffataafi darbaa dabarsaatti dhimma bahameera. Tooftaaleen raga qorannoo kanaa afgaaffii, daawwannaa alaafi ragaalee madda lammaffaatti fayyadameera. Akka argannoo qorannichaatti guddifachaa jechuun beekumsa naatoo (dilbii) kan labatni ofii isaatiif kalaqatee karaa duudhaa aadaatiin daa'ima itti fudhatanii kunuunsanii guddisaniidha. Innis yeroo durii kaasee kan hawaasni Oromoo itti fayyadamaa tureefi itti fayyadamaa jirudha. Guddifachaan mala duudhaa aadaatiin warri maatii fudhatu erga waliigaltee warra maatii kennu wajjin godheen booda kan daa'ima itti waliif kennaniidha. Daa'imni tunis haala safuu hawaasichaatiifi duudhaa, sonaafi dirqamaan kan itti kunuunfamtudha. Oromoon guddifachaa ilaalcha gaarii qaba. Sababni isaa kan itti maatiin ijoollee hinqabne daa'ima itti argataniifi booddee irratti immoo kan wabiifi kunuunsa (eegumsa) hawaasummaa itti gonfataniidha. Guddifachaa deebisanii dandammachiisuuf, jalqaba irratti sirna gadaa irratti sirriitti hojjetamuu qaba. Sababni isaa dhimmi aadaa, hawaasummaa, siyaasaafi eenyummaa Oromoo kan ofkeessatti hammatedha. Akka argannoon qorannoo kanaa agarsiisuutti guddifachaan aadaa bu'uura guddifachaa ammaayyaati. Kanaaf, mootummaafi dhaabbiileen mit-mootummaa guddifachaa aadaa kana jajjabeessuu qabu.*

### **Jehoota Ijoo: Bayyaannachiisuu, Beekumsa Naatoo, Guddifachaa, Saba Oromoo**

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#### **1. Introduction**

A number of studies have been conducted on adoption locally and across the world. Accordingly, adoption has been practiced starting from ancient time (Asmerom, 1973; Ayalew, 2002, Dessalegn, 2006; Sokoloff, 1993). Various researchers have emphasized who should be the center of the benefits of adoption (Cantwell, 2014; Emery, 1993; Hollinger, 1993; Ittig, 2003). Cantwell (2014) has focused on inter-country adoption and argued that the best interest of the child should be the paramount importance in adoption process where the child is the main actor. On the other hand, Hollinger (1993) stated that adoption is to serve the needs of triad parties, i.e., adopters, adoptees, birth families. Bartholet (2005), Daniel (2014), Groza and Bunkers (2014) and Tariku (2015) conducted their studies on the legal frameworks of adoption. It can be deduced from the authors' discussion that both domestic and international adoption should be undertaken in relation to legal instruments. On the other hand, Brittingham (2010), Rebecca (2013), Simegn (2015) and Tenagne (2006) have tried to show that birth families and adoptive families have faced experiences and challenges in the process of formal adoption, be it domestic or international.

Oromoo people have been practicing guddifachaa for several reasons. These include: (1) to have someone to take care of them in their old age so that they would get protection and security; (2) to inherit their lands and their property; (3) to have replacement of a lost child;

(4) a solution for infertility; (5) to get affine in order to extend network of ties; and (6) to enable the continuation of ancestors (Dessalegn, 2006; Fitzpatrick, 2013; Groza & Bunkers, 2014; Tariku, 2015). A domestic adoption is a childcare protection in which orphans and other vulnerable children are benefitting from a substitute and permanent family care (Ayalew, 2002; Dessalegn, 2006; Heran & Nega, 2019).

Concerning perspectives towards adoption, it is positively considered by biological and adoptive families (Ayalew, 2002; Dessalegn, 2006; Fagan, 2002; Groza & Bunkers, 2014). Oromoo people have been using various socio-cultural institutions to be integrated among themselves as well as with non-Oromoo clans (Abebayehu & Dejene, 2019; Amsalu, 2018; Ayalew, 2002; Chala, 2020; Mohammed, 2015 as cited Tesema, 2016).

On the basis of reviewed literature, it is noted that various studies have been conducted nationally and globally on adoption; however, the current researcher believed that conducting a study on guddifachaa might have a great potential to contribute to knowledge production in this area. This study, thus, addressed the issue at hand by integrating the inclusive perspectives of triad parties. More importantly, the reviewed literatures did not show how to revive guddifachaa as an indigenous childcare institution. Thus, the study aimed at describing the views of Oromoo people towards guddifachaa and ways to revitalize it in Tuulamaa Oromoo.

### 1.1. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to describe the perspectives of Oromoo people towards guddifachaa and ways to revitalize it in Tuulamaa Oromoo.

The following are the specific objectives;

- To describe *guddifachaa* from the perspectives of triad parties;
- To find out mechanisms of revitalization for *guddifachaa*.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Historical Overview of Adoption

Sokoloff (1993) indicated that reference to adoption could be found in the Bible and in the ancient codes, laws, and writings of Babylonians, Chinese, Egyptians, Hebrews and Hindus. According to Fitzpatrick (2013), adoption is not only Western culture, but it also exists cross-culturally. The time, place and the way adoption practices began in the societies cannot be known with precision (Ayalew, 2002). But certainly it is one of the oldest institutions practiced by many societies across the world since antiquity. This holds true for guddifachaa practice in Ethiopia and Oromoo society. Dessalegn (2006) pointed out that, in the Oromoo society, guddifachaa practice has a long history and started during the time of Gadaa system. Similarly, BBC Afan Oromoo (2019) affirmed that *guddifachaa* system is well-known in Oromoo society for a long period.

### 2.2. Motivation for Adoption

Kinship adoption theory indicates that adoptive parents would decide to adopt a child because they will have someone to take care of them in their old age, inherit their lands and their property as well as to have replacement of a lost child, or as a solution for infertility (Fitzpatrick, 2013). In addition, the primary reason for adoption was infertility (Groza & Bunkers, 2014). They stipulated that adoption is undertaken due to a call from God as well as

for needy children. *Guddifachaa* was considered as the means for preserving family lineage, enabling the continuation of ancestors, forging political alliances, and ensuring care for the adoptive parents (Tariku, 2015). The connection of *guddifachaa* and the *Gadaa* system by asserting that adoption practice might have been an instrument to reduce the difference in age between fathers and sons (Asmerom, 1973).

Sex preference matters, preferring male *guddifachaa* than female *guddifachaa*, and that it is also a mechanism in which non-Oromoo ethnic groups are integrated into the Oromoo society. The main purposes of *guddifachaa* are to get heir to properties and labor forces in pastoral or agricultural economies. The researcher further discussed that Oromos adopt a child when they have lost children due to death. On the other hand, females are adopted for the purpose of getting affine in order to extend network of ties (Ayalew, 2002). Likewise, doption is undertaken to assure continuity of their successor, secure inheritance of property and maintain paternal names (Dessalegn, 2006).

### 2.3. The Benefits of Adoption

Ancient adoption law was designed to benefit the adopter, and any benefits to the adoptee were secondary (Sokoloff, 1993). On the other hand, since adoption involves legal, psychological and social consequences, there are six principal elements in adoption that the law must gradually reconstruct to better serve the needs of the triad parties i.e., birth parents, adopters and adoptees. These principles are: (1) parental consent, (2) serving the child's interests by placement with suitable adoptive parents, (3) adoption as a gratuitous transfer, (4) adoptive relationships as substitutes for biological relationships, (5) confidentiality and anonymity of adoption, and (6) permanence of adoptive relationships (Hollinger, 1993). Adoption agencies are to benefit the triad parties (Emery, 1993). This is strong convergent finding for the intersection of the lives of child, adoptive parents, and birth families are crucially needed against a child-centered policy (Ittig, 1993). On the contrary, the best interests of the child should be the paramount importance in adoption process, in which a child is the main actor. In other words, adopted children are to be the primary beneficiaries of the adoption process according to the principle of the best interests of the child (Cantwell, 2014).

### 2.4. Perspectives towards Adoption

Adoption is a tremendous gift for the vast majority of children who experience it, as well as for their adoptive and biological families (Fagan, 2002). Historically, adoption has been viewed as a highly successful societal solution for the problems children face when biological families could not bring them up. In fact, the literature is overwhelmingly supportive of the benefits of adoption for these children, particularly when one considers the alternative care giving options available for them. For example, a research indicates that, on a variety of outcome measures, adopted children fare much better than those youngsters, who are reared in institutional environments or in foster care (Brodzinsky, 1993).

It is widely stipulated that across countries, adoption outcomes from the parents' perspective are quite positive. Adoptive parents expressed satisfaction with the adoption and with their

adoptee. In India, adoptions were also seen positively by adoptees (Groza & Bunkers, 2014). Adopters have a very strong respect and dignity for the institution of guddifachaa because it gives them a chance of having children as their own by cultural law. Adoptees have positive attitude for adoptive families and the guddifachaa practice (Dessalegn, 2006). A study on 450 adolescents found that adoptees communicate more positively and have more positive relationships with their adoptive parents than even biological children (Fagan, 2002). Adopters for guddifachaa become positive due to two main reasons. First, it gives family a child as if he/she was biologically born by customary law. Secondly, it gives the orphaned and neglected children a room and permanent care and support in the family system (Dessalegn, 2006). Adopted families consider their adoptees as biological children and vice versa (Ayalew, 2002). On the other hand, Heran and Nega (2019) portrayed people's perception towards adoption practice, adoptive parents and children are mixed; it could be positive and encouraging or negative and discouraging.

*Guddifachaa* exists in different forms such as *moggaasaa* and *harma hodhaa*. *Moggaasaa* is considered as socio-cultural mechanism of ethnic interactions and integrations. It also confirms that aspects of indigenous religion and related cultural traits of the Oromo have created wider interactions of different peoples between 16th -19th century (Amsalu, 2018). Likewise, people are merged and integrated each other through adoption practice (Chala, 2020).

*Guddifachaa* is the practice of adopting Oromoo or non-Oromoo children usually at young age by a given family; and *moggaasaa* is the adoption of relatively large group of people usually by Oromoo clan or clans to be integrated into their community (Mohammed, 2015 as cited Tesema, 2016). In *harma hodhaa*, the demand for adoption comes from the biological parents or caretaker of the child or the adopted person if adult, rather than the adoptive parents. The factors behind establishing *harma hodhaa* are both instrumental and emotional. It is arranged to find honest parents for a child merely from altruistic perspective. It is also instrumentally designed for some economic political and social interests (Abebayehu & Dejene, 2019).

The study provided a number of justifications to deal with indigenous childcare practice, guddifachaa. This study might have a great potential to contribute to knowledge production in the perspectives of triad parties, and mechanisms of revitalization were thoroughly investigated. It is neither included in the curricula of higher education studies nor courses though a minimal attention is currently apparent. More importantly, the researcher's observation and exposure might lead to understand the culture and to what extent *guddifachaa* is important in integrating and socializing children and orphans with adoptive families. Thus, conducting research on this issue might help to devise mechanisms of incorporating this significant number of children with adoptive families as one of alternative childcare practices.

The study has important implications for academicians and practitioners at all levels. Academically, it is hoped to contribute to the enhancement of existing knowledge of

*guddifachaa*. The outcome of the study could instigate further discussion and debate among scholars and development practitioners over the controversy regarding the benefits and challenges of adoption and customary adoption practice such as *guddifachaa* as feasible alternative childcare practice. Practically, it may create an insight for governmental and non-governmental organizations working on adoption and *guddifachaa*. Policy makers, advocates and other concerned bodies might consider the findings of the study as input to improve policy and practice.

### 3. Materials and Method

#### 3.1. Research Design

The study employed descriptive qualitative case study. Qualitative research was used to understand the phenomenon of *guddifachaa* comprehensively from the perspectives of triad parties; it allows the researcher to capture in-depth information. The study used descriptive research because the researcher did not intend to explain why Oromoo people are practicing *guddifachaa* but rather aimed at describing how they view it. Cross sectional research was appropriate, from its time dimension, because the study aimed at describing the current perspectives of participants towards *guddifachaa* by collecting data at a defined period. Case study was employed in this study assuming that the research questions or issue at hand can be well described by this approach. Triangulation of data sources such as in-depth interview, key informant, observation and document review were employed to colorfully articulate the issue by engaging different key informants such as *Abbaa Gadaa*, elders and experts in addition to triad parties.

#### 3.2. Study Area

The study was conducted in Tuulamaa Oromoo. According to Alemayehu(2009), Tuulamaa is a large clan of Booranaa in the Oromoo genealogy. This clan inhabits in Central Oromia, Shewa. Tuulamaa is divided into three sub-clans, commonly known as Tuulama Sadeen (the Three Tuulamaa). These sub-clans include Daaccii, Bachoo and Jiillee. These are also further divided into gosas. Bachoo has been selected in this study. Bachoo as sub-clan is divided into six gosas, known as Jahan Bachoo (the Six Bachoo). These are: Iluu, Metta, Urru, Garasu, Wajitu and Keku. Among the six gosas of Bachoo, Metta was selected to be the case for the study. Metta currently inhabits West Shewa, Metta Robi district, which is 114km from Addis Ababa (Finfinnee). This helped the researcher to become meaningfully involved in gosa as long as he is familiar with culture and language of the case. More importantly, time and financial resources were considered in choosing the case.

#### 3.3. Participants of the Study and Inclusion Criteria

Triad parties such as adoptive families, adoptees and birth families were the primary participants of this study. From an adoptive family, adoptive mother, adoptive father and adoptee were selected. Similarly, from a biologic family both mother and father were chosen in the study to entertain inclusive tripartite perspectives towards *guddifachaa*. In addition, *Abbaa Gadaa*, elders and experts were also participants because they are knowledgeable about the issue under study.

### **3.4. Sampling Techniques and Sample Size**

Non-probability sampling was utilized in the study. From the common type of non-probability, purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used. The researcher used purposive sampling because it can generate rich data to best serve the purposes of the study. Secondly, snowball sampling was employed after some participants have been identified based on pre-defined inclusion criteria by purposive sampling. Snowball sampling was chosen because the triad parties who have experienced guddifachaa were not easily accessible. More importantly, key informants who have knowledge on this issue can only be reached through this word of mouth technique. Twenty participants were interviewed at the point when data saturation was reached.

### **3.5. Methods of Data Collection**

Both primary and secondary data sources were used. From primary data sources, in-depth interview and key informant were employed. The in-depth interview was conducted with four adoptive families, four adoptees and four biological families. These three groups fit into in-depth interviews because they all have experienced the phenomenon. This meant that adoptive families have adopted a child; adoptees have been adopted; and biological families have relinquished their child for adoption. Key informant was held with eight participants including one Abbaa Gadaa, two elders, two experts from Oromoo society and three experts from different governmental offices. From secondary sources, different researches were widely consulted from reliable and interesting internet.

### **3.6. Methods of Data Analysis**

As the study was qualitative case study, thematic data analysis was employed. The researcher attempted to reduce the collected data into manageable themes from field notes and tape recorder. Since coding involves a systematic recording of data, codes to cover key themes, ideas and concepts that were collected from the study site were used. Categories and sub-categories for codes were developed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This means that data collected through in-depth interviews and key informant interview were thematically categorized and analyzed. Detailed analyses were categorized according to their similarity and difference of ideas. Besides, thematic ideas were identified and categorized based on the research questions. Headings for the categorized themes were given. Finally, the researcher came up with the headings and sub-headings in the results.

### **3.7. Ethical Considerations**

The study involved ethical issues because data were collected from people and about people. Since data were collected from participants above eighteen ages, all of them were capable of providing consent. After the purpose of the study was explained and established that the study output was for educational purposes, participants showed willingness to be part of the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained.

## 4. Results and Discussions

### 4.1. Motives for *Guddifachaa*

The current study stressed that *guddifachaa* is a cultural practice of the Oromoo society and a social progeny in which families or infertile partners, who may not have their own biological children, adopt from other families, who have children for adoption, and are supportive of adoptive families. The study also identified the different reasons of why adoptive families are adopting children from biological families in Oromoo society, which include: (1) to get inheritors for their property; (2) to get social protection or social security; (3) to get one who buries them when they die or to get one who takes care of their funerary rites; (4) to maintain continuity of one's lineage; and (5) to get one who cares or helps; (6) to get one who keeps and maintains one's house or resources; (7) to have one who keeps the memory of one's name; and (8) to get expanded relatives or networks by getting Soddaa (affine).

The data obtained from the study is congruent with the existing literature. Accordingly, families do undertake adoption in order to have someone to take care of them in their old age, have inheritors for their property, preserve family lineage, ensure care for adoptive families, maintain paternal names and for the purpose of getting affine in order to extend network of ties (Ayalew, 2002; Dessalegn, 2006; Fitzpatrick, 2013; Tariku, 2015).

The study also found that childless couples or infertile partners sire to adopt children in order to have their own children. In addition, when families have lost their biological children or when their matured offspring leave houses for various reasons, families may take *guddifachaa* children. These data affirm John Silk's Kinship Theory of Adoption. According to this theory, for adoption to take place, a reason or an expectation given is to have replacement of a lost child, or it is a solution for infertility (Fitzpatrick, 2013). This implies that adoption, particularly *guddifachaa* is undertaken for various motives.

According to the study, males are adopted in majority as per to Oromoo culture. Males are preferred than females because it is believed that males maintain the house of adoptive families, maintain continuity of one's genealogical line, and keep the memory of adoptive families. Males have also roles that may not be performed by females such as slaughtering, blessings, engaging in war and paying compensation. The reviewed literature also confirmed that males are more preferred than females because they will get married and bring brides to the house of adoptive families so as to maintain their houses and resources and eventually inherit the property (Ayalew, 2002; Dessalegn, 2006).

The current study contends that, according to Oromoo culture, *guddifachaa* is undertaken to benefit adoptive families. The benefits of adoptive families are to be cared for and helped by adoptees; keep maintained the house of adoptive families; get inheritor for one's property; maintain continuity of one's lineage; keep remembered one's names; and have social protection and social security. Thus, from the above contentions, it is understandable that *guddifachaa* has been started to serve adoptive family or adoptive family is the central beneficiary of *guddifachaa* in Oromoo culture. However, the centeredness of adoptive family does not mean that adoptees are deprived of benefits or property inheritance. Rather they are highly respected and everything is fulfilled accordingly.

This finding is strongly congruent with what has been stipulated by Sokoloff (1993) as adoption was designed to benefit adoptive families, and any benefits to the adoptees were



secondary. Likewise, adoptive families adopt children for the intention of getting benefit in the form of social security because they would be taken care of in their old age (Fitzpatrick, 2013). On the contrary, Cantwell (2014) signposted that adopted children reap the primary benefit of the adoption process according to the principle of the best interests of the child. From the discussion, it is believed that the best interest of the child is still secured in customary adoption though adoptive family is at the center of the benefit of *guddifachaa*. Further, this study stipulated that when an infertile couple or an infertile woman adopts *guddifachaa* child, it is believed that adoptive family may give birth. The findings showed that there are people who have delivered their own biological child after adopting a child. This is because adoption is believed to bring good omen and the adoptive child is considered good luck. *Guddifachaa* is considered as good fortune for infertile adoptive family.

#### 4.2. Challenges of *Guddifachaa*

The data indicated that previous authoritarian regimes were putting pressure on indigenous culture of Oromoo people, particularly *guddifachaa*. It was further discussed that the Civil Code of Ethiopia, which was legalized during the reign of Haile Sellassie pointed out that others' culture had to be banned. As well, the expansion of Christianity and Islam as religions had their own impact on culture. This finding aligns with Dessalegn's (2006) and Tariku's (2015) contention that previous regimes politically and through the introduction of Christianity and Islam socially or culturally were negatively impacting the importance and cultural practices of *guddifachaa*.

This study asserts that legal instruments of adoption were pressurizing customary adoption to be engulfed by formal adoption. These legal instruments are not only weakening customary adoption but also leaving vulnerable children without adoption. Similarly, Tariku (2015) asserted that the imposition of modern law of adoption has been weakening practices of customary adoption. Thus, modern law of adoption had its own negative influence on customary adoption.

The study at hand averred that *guddifachaa* declined because of loosening respect for existing values and norms; social, economic and systems broken down; children are born out of wedlock; marriage institution is broken down; weakening of *Gadaa* system; and poor network of nuclear family, extended family and neighbor. As Ayalew (2002) asserted, since *guddifachaa* involves economic imperatives, such as access to inheritance and resources, traditional mutual supports and rendering social securities are regulated, sanctioned and enforced by the customary law enacted by *Gadaa* Leaders, the weakening of *Gadaa* system by the same token declines *guddifachaa*. It is noted that the less reverence to societal norms and ethics, the more dwindling to indigenous culture.

#### 4.3. Disindigenization of Childcare Practice in Ethiopia

Data generated from this study showed that policies and legal instruments are driven from Western Developed countries that may not consider the context of this country. For this matter, indigenous knowledge system and indigenous childcare practices, for instance, *guddifachaa*, is not entertained in these local policies. This is supported by Laird (2013), as policies of Sub-Saharan Africa parrot those in many Western societies, which are void of indigenous customs, beliefs, values, practices and kinship.

The current study discussed that it is better for a child to grow in their culture and with their relatives rather than propagating that the best interests of the child is only ensured by healthy life condition, well schooling and well dressing of the Westerners. The best interest of the child is still vague in itself. In line with this, African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) (2012) confirmed that a child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background should be given due consideration while dealing with adoption. In addition, Pence (2009) stated that best practice is imported from Western countries through support of donors rather than arising from indigenous practices locally.

It is worth mentioning here that notions of childcare practices which are embedded in policies of Sub-Saharan African countries and Ethiopia are ignorant of indigenous culture of the continent. Parroting the Western policies by African societies may have the intention of westernization and homogenization rather than maintaining indigenization, heterogenization and diversification. In addition, it is considered quite heretical that the Westerners have been in romanticisation in thinking globalization and acting localization. This threatens glocalization rather than in thinking localization and acting globalization that treats diversification.

#### **4.4. Perspectives on *Guddifachaa***

Customary adoption is considered positively because it is common practice of indigenous culture of the Oromoo people that has been practiced since antiquity. It is regarded in positive light because it is a practice in which infertile partners or families, who do not have children, take children through cultural ritual practice from other families to take care of the adoptees as their own biological children. It was further discussed that *guddifachaa* is viewed as acceptable cultural practice in which community feels empathy towards a family, who is left without adopting a child, because such family's property is misused and lost as well as their names are forgotten due to their ignorance towards *guddifachaa*.

Furthermore, the study showed that *guddifachaa* is essential to keep maintained house of adoptive families, maintained continuity of genealogical line and get inheritors of property. More importantly, it is positively considered when wellbeing and benefits of the children are respected and the best interest of the child is ensured. Data of the study from the triad parties, elders, Abbaa Gadaa and experts have stressed that *guddifachaa* is seen positively since it is a common best practice in the Oromoo culture in which childless families get their own children.

Likewise, when treating the current data with the existing literature, they support each other. Accordingly, adoption is a tremendous gift for the adopted children, adopted families and biological families. The triad parties have positive perspectives towards adoption, particularly adoptive families have a very strong respect and dignity for the institution of *guddifachaa* because they have got their own children. It is also a highly successful societal solution for children, whom biological families could not bring up (Brodzinsky, 1993; Dessalegn, 2006; Fagan, 2002; Groza & Bunkers, 2014). It is believed that the Oromoo have positive views towards *guddifachaa* since it endows childless families with adopted children to bring up as their own.

#### **4.5. Revitalization of *Guddifachaa***

The study revealed that recording of Gadaa system in United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) can be considered better prospect for guddifachaa as far as it is a part and parcel of Gadaa system. The use of guddifachaa as a term in different legal instruments of the country can also be taken as an opportunity. Similarly, Gadaa system is becoming strengthened in different parts of Oromia. As Gadaa system is becoming strong, it is also good for the right of children. As culture of Oromoo becomes revived, guddifachaa as the right of child becomes strong. In addition, it is a culture and practice for Oromoo society from antiquity; so, it is not new for them. Being given recognition by Family Code is a good opportunity for guddifachaa to revive. Getting support from the law of the land helps guddifachaa to continue to be practiced. Having support of law is considered a good opportunity for customary adoption to be flourished because customary adoption is guaranteed to be practiced by community as far as it is secured by law; and the community is also initiated to strengthen and practice its indigenous culture. This finding is strongly fitted into the existing literature. Heran and Nega (2019) affirmed banning inter-country adoption by the government of Ethiopia as of January 2018 while there are sizable children in need of substitute and permanent family care proves the necessity of cultivating domestic adoption practices and revitalizing guddifachaa which is customary alternative childcare practice originated among the Oromoo and widely accepted across the country.

## 5. Conclusion

Guddifachaa is driven from Afan Oromoo term and is common cultural practice of Oromoo society in which families have been adopting for various motives based on its ritual purpose since time immemorial. One of the peculiarities in the Oromoo practice of guddifachaa is that children are predominantly adopted for social protection and social security of adoptive families. Accordingly, as to the data of the study, there are different motives for guddifachaa to be undertaken in Oromoo culture such as to be cared for and helped by adoptees; get inheritor for one's property; have protection and security; keep maintained house of adoptive families; keep remembered their names; and keep maintained continuity of one's lineage. Male children are largely adopted than female children since the society believes in males genealogical lines and assumes that males can play different roles that may not be discharged by females as a result of social construction. *Guddifachaa* is positively viewed because it is an indigenous culture in which childless families or those seeking children get children to be cared and helped in the long run and eventually to get inheritors to their property. This implies that *guddifachaa* is an asset in which children get protection beyond adoptive families.

The study indicated that registering *Gadaa* system in UNESCO as intangible cultural heritage of the world, using the term *guddifachaa* in different legal instruments of the country, re-strengthening of *Gadaa* system in different parts of Oromia and being of guddifachaa as cultural practice of Oromoo society can be considered as prospects of guddifachaa. *Guddifachaa* can be revitalized if the system of Oromoo as a whole is revived; and all the underlying values of *Safuu* should be respected and valued as in the previous days. It is deduced that in order to revitalize *guddifachaa*, first *Gadaa* system should be revived because

it is all about cultural, social and political issues as far as it is the symbol umbrella of the Oromoo's identity.

*Guddifachaa* is very advantageous for the triad parties including adoptive families, adoptees and biological families. Regarding the best interests of the child, due to the deep-rooted nature of *Safuu* among the Oromoo people, adopted children are well treated and rarely mistreated. It was further depicted that adoptive families were fulfilling basic needs, provision of education, fulfilling spiritual and affection and caring for hygiene of adoptees; and property inheritance is also provided or shared for them. The relationship of adoptive families with adoptees has successfully substituted the already existing relationship of biological families with biological children; and it was also uncovered that the relationship of adoptive families with adoptees is irrevocable and sustained in Oromoo culture as far as customary adoption is fitted into the best interests of the child.

*Guddifachaa* child in Oromoo society is undertaken by ritual purpose. This implies that as the Oromoo have given high value for adopted children. Because it is witnessed by all community members, but undertaking *guddifachaa* at court is much overlooked. Because even the lawyer or the judge who passes decision on that day, could not remember about the event. Customary adoption is more acceptable than formal adoption because it has strong *Safuu* in which adoptees are highly protected and secured. Since adopted children are sometimes nowadays maltreated by adoptive family, concomitantly both customary and formal adoptions go hand in hand. This means, after *guddifachaa* is undertaken traditionally and ritually, it can be announced to court to be recognized.

## 6. Recommendations

The study indicated that governmental organizations were not giving due attention to local childcare practice. In addition, it was discussed that Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs at federal level and Oromia Bureau of Women, Children and Youth Affairs at regional level were hardly giving recognition to customary adoption. Thus, since customary adoption is a base for formal adoption, governmental and non-governmental organizations may support and give recognition to *guddifachaa*. More to the point, asset of *guddifachaa* infers the importance of customary adoption is irrefutable so that such an indigenous cultural practice may not be limited to its birth place, Oromia; rather, it is better to scale up to different parts of the country.

The study pointed out that Oromoo people have been practicing *guddifachaa* starting from antiquity to present in cultural and traditional fashion. Although *guddifachaa* is positively viewed by Oromoo people, adopted children are sometimes getting in conflict with adoptive families on property inheritance. Thus, in order to undertake adoption smoothly, both formal (adoption by court) and cultural adoption (*guddifachaa*) should go simultaneously hand in hand so that the rights of children are more respected and guaranteed.

Research is very essential to bring forth an issue from where it is hidden. Although *guddifachaa* is an indigenous practice that has received the attention of scholars recently, it still requires further research on its different dimensions/aspects. Thus, the researcher believes that *guddifachaa* requires rigorous research in the future on the following issues. First, comparative study of customary and formal adoption needs to be studied because the previous studies including the current one hardly discussed it. Second, attitudes towards

customary adoption/*guddifachaa* in Oromia, which is either quantitative study or mixed method, should be undertaken because the previous studies and the current one were exclusively qualitative.

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